Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat *Incorporated*

NOVEMBER 1996

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting :	**Nov 1**	**Stella Bedggood Memorial**
		Mr B Adcock: Planet Jupiter
Meeting :	**Dec 6**	**Mr G Bradley : Meteorology**
Excursion :	**Nov 3**	**Lake Corangamite: Mr R Missen**
Excursion :	**Nov 22-24**	**FNCB Campout: Heathcote**
Excursion :	**Dec 8**	**BBQ at Slaty Creek**

President: Mr G Binns Ph:
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

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PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building, School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard St South, commencing at 7.30 pm.
Excursions commence from the corner of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at 9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30 pm for half-day excursions.

Field Reports

John Stayt - John and Elizabeth have been travelling again. Some highlights of their recent trip included - a Carpet Python at Cooloola National Park, the Regent Bowerbird at Lamington National Park, Humpback Whales at Byron Bay, Eastern Curlew and Godwits at Caloundra. The weir at the Menindie Lakes on the Darling River which overflows only every 10 years or so. Another highlight was the regular sighting of platypus at the Caernarvon Gorge National Park.

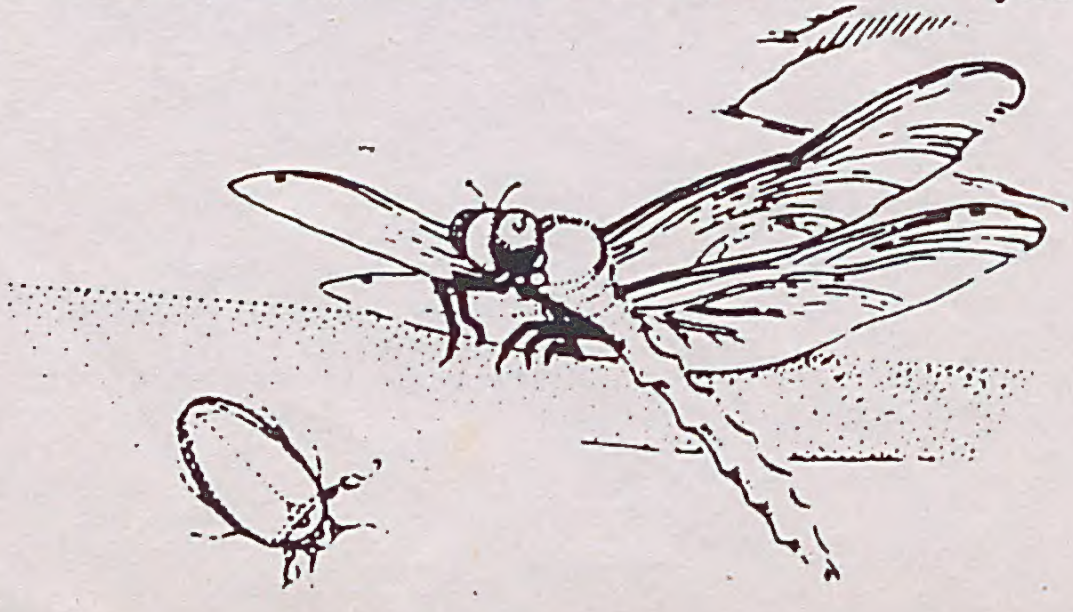
Alan Morrison - a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles Alan has been watching for some time are breeding again. Alan has studied a pair of Peregrine Falcons at Langi Ghiran and noticed the male bird has disappeared. Also reported - Crested Grebes now present at Lake Wendouree.

John Gregurke - eleven Shelduck young which took protective "cover" around a stump in the lake while the mother swam for shore.

Brian - one of our guest for the meeting - had two sightings in a week of the Grey Falcon at Mootwingi National Park

Frank Harrap - had seen two Peregrine Falcons while driving along the Buninyong - Sebastopol road.

Stephanie Davison - a pair of kookaburras in her garden in Peel Street -kookaburras had not been seen there for about 4 years.



Greg Binns - on a trip to and from Mildura - had not seen one rabbit. At Redbank Greg had seen a pair of Chestnut - breasted Shelduck with 8 ducklings. The female was attempting to lead Greg away from the young. Also observed - 3 Kestrels, 4 Black Kites and 1 Brown Goshawk.

Graeme Ambrose - noted the butterfly season is late this year. The first butterflies were not seen until mid September, being Australian Admirals and Painted Ladies.

Jackie and Denis Hammond - Goldfinches and Red-rumped Parrots seen in Wendouree.

Painted Lady on the everlasting
Dargan Hill Monach.

DIARY DATES

Sunday 3 November - Excursion to Lake Corangamite and Colac area commences from the corner of Sturt and Armstrong Streets at 9.30 am. We rendezvous with our leader Mr Robert Missen at the Hall at Cressy at 10.30 am

22 - 24 November - FNCB weekend Campout at Heathcote. This is our own Club Annual Campout and promises to be a most interesting event. (Note details published in September Newsletter). Sheets outlining directions for reaching the camp site are available from John Gregurke.

Tuesday November 26 7.30 pm Committee meeting at Durham Lead (Tony Dyson)

Dalyenong Excursion **Sunday 20th October, 1996**

The long trip to Dalyenong was a rewarding journey. In the morning we visited a 40 acre Flora and Fauna Reserve surrounded by farmland. The sandy soil had been very wet during the winter, kangaroos had left very deep footprints. The previous winter was extremely dry with many Common Fringe-myrtle plants dying and the Long-leaved Box were sprouting from epicormic shoots.

The spring flowering plants were in full bloom. Daphne Heath, Beard Heath and Common Fringe-myrtle were the most plentiful. Hidden beneath these larger shrubs were Showy Parrot-pea, Blue Squill, Flame Heath, Guinea Flower and Goodenias. The plants which created the most interest were the orchids. We were able to find 10 species: Green-comb Spider, Waxlip, Purplish Beard, Hooded Caledenia, Pink Fingers, Leek, Rabbit ears, Spotted Sun, Salmon Sun and Donkey Orchid.

The weather was fine and sunny but there were few birds in the bush. Keen eyes and ears identified White-winged Choughs, Rufous Songlark, Crimson Rosella, Eastern Rosella, Striated Pardalote, Brown Treecreeper and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater among others. The raucous calls of Long-billed Corellas were unmistakable. In the north-west corner of the block the old Yellow Gums were good habitat trees with many hollows.

A stop on a wide road side had several highlights. Chocolate Lilies were flowering everywhere. About 100 Green-comb Spider Orchids were flowering in one room-sized patch. Several arthropods were observed: a pair of mating wasps, small spiders in a bundle of web in a Hedge wattle and a delicate Lacewing showing iridescent colours in its wings.

During the afternoon we visited the main Dalyenong block. This area seemed drier but had similar shrubs. The box trees were flowering but still birds were elusive. An interest shrub was the Stiff Geebung, the specimen near our cars had a lot of dead wood and good crop of green fruits.

A quick stop at the Natte Yallock cemetery concluded the day. Some othe plants flowering were Golden Moths Orchid, Rice Flower and Running Postman.

Thanks to Ron Bishop and Bruce Osborn from Maryborough who lead our excursion and Margaret Rotheram for scouting out the area. JG

FROGWATCH - Dr Graeme Ambrose - Meeting 4 October

Twenty years ago scientists became concerned about the decline in frog populations. There seem to be various causes - some identified, some not. Obvious causes included the draining of breeding sites, increasing use of pesticides, increasing salinity and continuing changes in land use. In some areas, thought to be pristine, frog populations disappeared or declined and here the causes were not clear and surveys and studies are attempting to clarify what has gone wrong in the frog world. "Introduced" species of fish and frogs have almost certainly had some affect.

Frogs are amphibians - adapted to live on land and in water. There are three orders of amphibians -

1 Caudata (tailed) including newts and salamanders, not found naturally in Australia.

2 Apoda or Gymnophiona - a group of limbless wormlike creatures not seen in Australia.

3 Salientia or Anura - frogs and toads. This is the only order found naturally in Australia. The adults are tail-less with four limbs.

Salientia is divided into families -

1 Bufonidae - rough warty skins, no teeth and poison glands - the Cane Toad is the only member of this family in this country.

2 Hylidae (known generally as Tree Frogs, some found in the Ballarat area) - several species within this family - they have skins of various textures , possess teeth, feature adhesive toe discs and often climb rocks and trees.

3 Myobatrachidae (often known collectively as the Southern Frogs, some found in the Ballarat area) - several species within this family, they usually have teeth, lack toe discs and rarely climb trees.

Graeme supplied us with detailed notes concerning our "local" frogs (principally the Southern Brown Tree Frog, Common Eastern Froglet, Eastern Banjo Frog, (Eastern Pobblebonk), Plains Froglet, Spotted Grass Frog and Common Spadefoot Toad. These notes and a prepared Survey Data Sheet were invaluable companions for our excursion on the 5th October.

Our thanks to Graeme for such an informative and enjoyable two days.

Graeme suggested some useful references including:

Casey, K (1966) Attracting frogs to your garden.
Kimberley Publications

Hero J M., Littlejohn, M J and Marantelli, G (1991) Frogwatch field guide to Victorian frogs DCNR, Melb. This book and an audiocassette of frog calls is available from the DNRE (now called), 240 Victoria Pde., East Melb. 3002

Littlejohn, M J (1987) Audiocassette: Calls of Victorian frogs. Available from the Dept. of Zoology, University of Melbourne, Parkville, 3052

Tyler, M J (1994) Australian frogs Australian Museum/Reed Books, Sydney
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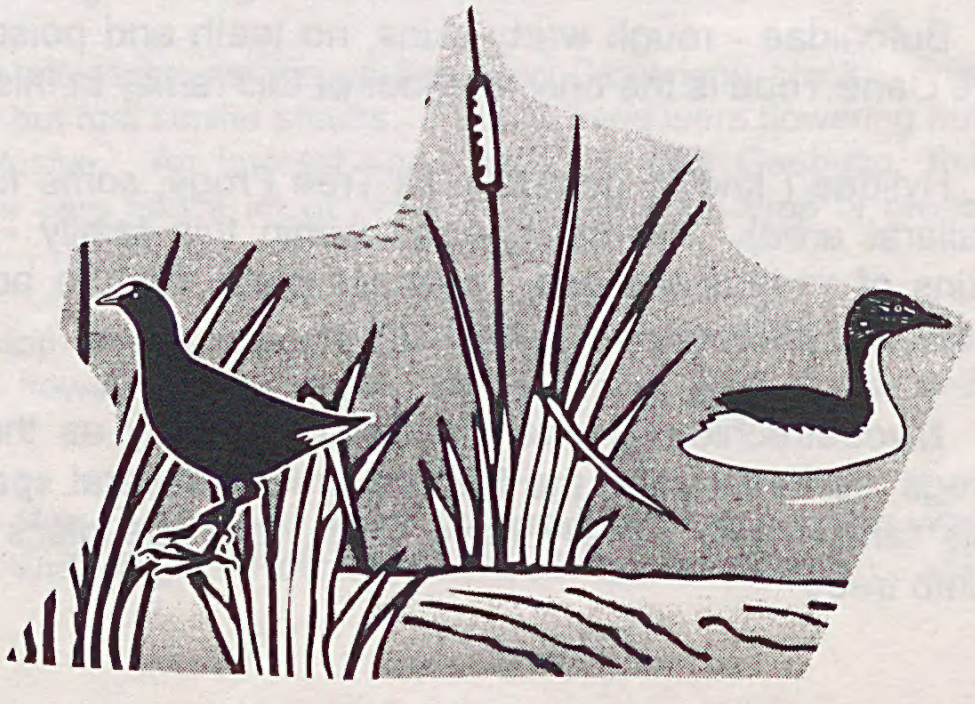

WETLAND FROGS - Excursion October 5

The sequel to a talk on frogs given by Dr Graeme Ambrose at the October meeting was a successful late afternoon and evening excursion on the following day.

In spite of overcast and damp conditions members met with members of the Creswick FNC at the west end of Lake Wendouree and enjoyed walks there and later at Winter Swamp. Both bodies of water were full to overflowing and bird life was active. Crested Grebes, andReed-warblers were now established in numbers for the breeding season, and White-eyed Ducks and a number of clutches of cygnets (to two weeks) were present. Amongst the activity at Winter Swamp were large groups of Hoary Headed and Australasian Grebes, Lapwings and the Ibis rookeries were well inhabited.

After a picnic tea under cover at the lake, Graeme led our enthusiastic party to several venues for identification of frog calls after dark.
Survey sheets were put to good use in identifying and recording the following species -

Convent Corner (Lake Wendouree): Southern Brown Tree Frog

Fairyland (Lake Wendouree): Southern Brown Tree Frog, Common Eastern Froglet, Common Spadefoot Toad.

Winter Swamp: Southern Brown Tree Frog, Plains Froglet, Common Eastern Froglet, Spotted Grass Frog, Common Spadefoot Toad.

Ross Creek (Napoleons Road): Southern Brown Tree Frog, Common Eastern Froglet, Eastern Pobblebonk, Spotted Grass Frog.

Warm clothing, flashlights and absorbing interest carried members through what could have been a daunting prospect. We are grateful to Graeme for his excellent introduction to a most fascinating and important group of our fauna. Members were urged to continue surveying the presence of frogs in our local wetlands, This is indeed a worthwhile project.

Greg Binns

Mammals Found in the Ballarat Area No 14

Mice and Rats Order Rodentia.

Rodents are characterised by having only 1 pair of upper and 1 pair of lower incisors, the teeth are long and curved backwards and grow continuously throughout life. Since the front surface consists of tough enamel and the back is made up of softer dentine an incisor is continually sharpened to a razor edge.

Small rodents constitute a major source of food for carnivorous animals and birds. They tend to reach sexual maturity at an early age. The order is very diverse such animals as capybara, agouti, porcupines squirrels, flying squirrels, cavies and beavers bto name some. They are classified into 4 suborders and 24 families, however, all the Australian species fall into one family "The Muridae.

The vast majority _ the so called "old endemics" are further restricted to a single subfamily the Hydromy inae, found in the Australian Asian region. 7 spec ies of rat _ comprising the "new endemics" _ the ancestors of which came to Australia no earlier than a Million years ago _ are members of the subfamily Murinae and the 2 species of rat and 1 mouse brought by Europeans also belong to the Murinae, evidense suggests that the Hydromini - characterised by the presence of 4 nipples in females - fall into 3 designated tribes Hydromyini, Uromyini, Conilurini and probably a fourth (not yet designated to in clude the little understood prehensile tailed rats. Rodents have been aptly named the late invaders among Australian mammalsfauna. A small number (conceivably as few as one) crossed from Eastern Indonesia into the Australian New Guinea region no more than 15,000,000 years ago, and the subsequent evolutionary radiation has led to less variety than found in other continents where they have been in residence for at least 4 times as long. In common with marsupials, many native rodents have suffered reduction in numbers since settlement 7 species have become extinct and a further 12 or so are ass umed at risk.

Elfin

Stella Bedggood

The Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture was inaugurated in 1979 to honour the memory of an esteemed Life Member of the club. The first speaker was Dr Jim Willis, the distinguished Victorian Government Botanist, who had known Stella for many years.

Stella was a long-serving member of the club. She was known and respected as a botanist, bird observer and photographer, not just in Ballarat but among likeminded enthusiasts, amateur and professional, in the wider community.

English-born and largely self-taught in natural history, she did most of her studies in an era when, unlike the present array of illustrated field guides, there were few books for amateurs. Then the pursuit of natural science was a matter of individual diligence. Armed with Willis's Flora she would patiently key out plants, always searching for more knowledge. She was meticulous in gathering precise information, which made her quite formidable in the conservation tussles of the seventies. Economic decisions were resulting in the clearing of local hardwood forests for pine plantations. Stella had the attention and respect of the Forests Commission officers and was able to save many areas by putting a strong informed case. In often emotive issues, her calm persistence worked quiet miracles.

She did much of her field work with her husband Ted, accompanying him into the bush when he was cutting firewood. Few people had such an intimate knowledge of the bushlands in this region. They were also intrepid travellers and went on birding expeditions across the continent when the road across the Nullabor was still a gravel track.

In the club she was most valued for her leadership and teaching. She was a patient instructor for anyone eager to learn. There are still club members who owe much to Stella's enthusiasm and influence. She was strict in her expectations that the bush should be understood and respected without undue interference.

She had a great sense of humour, loved her family above all and was a kind friend to many people who were handicapped in some way.

The same meticulous attitude that she brought to the pursuit of natural science, she also applied to photography as a very successful member of the Ballarat Camera Club. She was president for many years.

When she died, the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat was bereft of her friendship and especially her wealth of knowledge. The years have enabled others to take her place as teachers and leaders in the field, but the club remembers her with gratitude, affection and admiration.